

Psalm 2

Introduction

The NT tells us that all Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable to grow us up and equip us as Christ-followers (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When Paul wrote this, the NT had not yet been compiled, and so it is probable that he was referring in the first instance to the OT Scriptures. When we read the OT with this in mind, we should also realize that the NT often serves as a commentary on the OT. The book of Psalms is one of the most quoted books in the NT, and Psalm 2 is one of the most quoted Psalms. It is a prophecy about the death, resurrection, and reign of King Jesus, and this is made most clear by examining the commentary the NT authors give us.

The Crucifixion

Psalm 2 is first directly quoted in Acts 4. Having been imprisoned for declaring the gospel, Peter and John are released and return to the disciples. In their praise for this deliverance, they quote Psalm 2:1-2, attributing the psalm specifically to David (Acts 4:23ff). The disciples see the opening verses of Psalm 2 as directly referring to the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate and Herod and the Romans (“the Gentiles/nations”) and the Jews (“the people”) were the ones David prophesied about, gathering together to rebel against the Lord and His Anointed (Heb., *meshiach*; Gr., *christos*). When they conspire to throw off God’s authority, what is His response? David said that He who sits in the heavens laughs and mocks the rebellious ones (v. 4). The disciples remember this as well, and so they acknowledge that Pilate and Herod and the Jews had gathered together “to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done” (Acts 4:28). At the cross, everything seemed to be unraveling. Jesus was shamefully mocked and painfully tortured and then hung on the tree like a cursed man. Mary was there weeping. The cowardly disciples were scattered. Peter was stabbing Jesus in the back. Judas had done worse, but by this time he was gathering a rope to hang himself. With all of this going on, God was up in heaven, not wringing His hands and wondering how He would untangle this mess. No, He was laughing, not because He is sadistic and enjoyed the pain He observed, but because He had the divine perspective. This was all part of the plan to crush the Serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15) and bring salvation and forgiveness to the world. He was not concerned in the least. When the disciples saw the stirrings of persecution against the early church, they understood this, rejoiced greatly, and prayed for more boldness.

The Resurrection

God’s laughter at His enemies is not all fun and games, though. He will “distress them in His deep displeasure” (v. 5). He declares that He has established His King on the holy hill of Zion (v. 6). Note that this declaration of the King is distressing to those in rebellion to God. The King then speaks and explains the decree (v. 7). Paul makes clear that this part of the psalm is about the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:33-34). At first, this seems a confusing application of the verse. Remember that Jesus is called the firstborn from the dead (Rev. 1:5). The Son had always been the Son, and even before the crucifixion, Jesus was clearly identified as such (e.g., Matt. 3:16). By means of the resurrection, however, Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4). Having humbled Himself to take on human flesh, when He came up from the grave, the Son was exalted as the God-Man even

above the angels (Heb. 1:5). In other words, God laughed at the folly of Herod and Pilate because their plans were the stage on which Jesus overcame sin and death, establishing His reign.

The Inheritance

Then, the Lord tells the Son to simply ask, and He will receive the nations and the ends of the earth (v. 8, cf. Heb. 1:2). This inheritance delivered to Him upon His resurrection distinguishes Him above the angels (Heb. 1:4). Jesus appears to have remembered this promise from Psalm 2 when He faced the temptation of the devil in the wilderness. Trusting God's declaration over Him and His promise, Jesus resisted the devil and refused to worship him (Matt. 4:8-10). And then, after the resurrection, Jesus told His disciples that He had in fact been given all authority in heaven *and on earth* (Matt. 28:18). He received what had been promised to Him. The kingdoms of the earth are His, and so kings and rulers are warned to be wise, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling (vs. 10-11). Because He is King over all the nations, Jesus told His disciples therefore to go and make disciples of those nations. Jesus says that His people will likewise rule over the nations with the same power that was given to Him, (Rev. 2:26-27, quoting v. 9). They are to extend the kingdom through the authoritative declaration of the gospel. The church is to exhort kings and rulers to kiss the Son. And the church then prays for their repentance. God even desires kings and those in authority to be saved so that we might be able to live peaceably (1 Tim. 2:1-4). God intends to turn all the nations to Himself such that every knee bows at the name of Jesus and every tongue confesses that Jesus the Anointed One is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).

Conclusion

This Messianic psalm has many implications and applications for us. First, we are reminded of the purpose of our worship. Who is this Lord that we come to honor on the Lord's Day? He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and so our worship should reflect the honor and reverence due to Him. He is to be served with fear, and in His presence we ought to rejoice with trembling. Second, we are reminded of the nature of the nations. The kingdoms of the world belong to Jesus (Rev. 11:15), and while this is not fully realized yet, it is not some reality that is only true in our future. They are His now and are called to act accordingly. Woodinville and Bothell are His, Seattle is His, Washington state is His, the United States are His. Thirdly, this understanding of the victory of Jesus gives to you, His people, a great confidence. He trusted in His Father's words all the way through the cross and grave, and accordingly He was given a great inheritance. Do not forget that His inheritance includes you—you are part of "the nations." And if you are His, then you also are sons and heirs with Him (Rom. 8:14ff). So the Father's declaration at the resurrection—"You are My Son, today I have begotten You"—is said over you as well. This verse in many ways sums up the gospel: Jesus was raised from the dead and given all authority, and you have been raised with Him. There is therefore no reason to doubt, to despair, to complain, to give up the fight, to give in to temptation. "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."